

Senate Committee Hearing for Beach Grooming Bill 1025

Testimony from Utz Schmidt Lansing, April 25, 2012

Address: 5790 N Lakeshore Rd, Palms MI 48465, email; utz.schmidt1985@gmail.com

(A few amendments to the spoken testimony are made for better understanding. These bits of information had been left out because of the time limitation and to avoid repetition of prior testimonies.)

Good morning & thanks for the opportunity.

I am Utz Schmidt. We live 12 miles north of Port Sanilac with Lake Huron beachfront.

In 1985 we bought the lake property, attracted by the beautiful sandy beach. The carp spawned every year in front even though, or very likely just because; there were no plants except some seaweed in the water.

Phragmites started to take over the beach, and muck collected in between; so nothing but occasional birds entered the fast growing wall of phragmites. The DEQ declared the mess "emerging wetlands," good for wildlife and fish. *It got questionable if there was still a lake behind, because there was no longer a view to the water.*



Pict. 1: Is there a Lake behind?

One day, after the dog from a neighbor and visiting grandkids from another neighbor had fun playing in the muck, the dog died and the kids got sick. *We all woke up and started to resent the DEQ interference.* The beach got more and more deserted; nobody liked it there anymore. *You could not even go swimming without*



*Pict. 2: Who wants to **go swimming** here? wading through the muck. The carp ceased to come and as a result, there were no longer minnows. They might not have read the DEQ message, that phragmites were good for them. Also our resident geese nested far away from the phragmites boundaries.*



*Pict. 3: DEQ's "**spawning area**"*



Fed up with the situation in 2008 and joined by ten neighbors, I applied for a group permit and we hired a professional company to spray. *To reach the far out plants at the waters edge, they tried to enter and got hopelessly stuck. It was fun to see but added to the cost.*

The more and more dropping water level did not allow a water flow because the previous channels were blocked by muck and the dead root system of the phragmites. The situation was aggravated by rows of stones, called weirs, reaching from the beach out into the water. They had been piled up in the '40s when the water level was extremely low. So in 2010 from the DNR, DEQ and Corps of Army Engineers, we got permits for removal and beach grooming.

We all spent lots of time and money to reach the point of a clean beach, and we all continuously work on it. *Unfortunately, to the north and south of us, there are still huge stands of phragmites.*

The water level still dropped but it did not prevent the sand from taking over the previously declared emerging wetlands – so the **sand submerged the wetlands** even at lower water levels.



Pict. 5: Sand overtakes DEQ's "emerging wetland"